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FM AMEMBASSY MASERU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4125  
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
RUEHMR/AMEMBASSY MASERU 4552

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MASERU 000126

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/S, DS/IP/AF, DS/IP/ITA, AND DS/DSS/CC  
PRETORIA FOR DATT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/29/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [LT](#)  
SUBJECT: ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT: FOREIGN MINISTER INDIRECTLY  
IMPLICATES OPPOSITION

REF: A. MASERU 116 B. MASERU 123 C. MASERU 112 AND PREVIOUS  
MASERU 00000126 001.2 OF 002

CLASSIFIED BY: Elizabeth C. Power, Deputy Chief of Mission.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

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Summary  
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1. (C) The Minister of Foreign Affairs briefed heads of diplomatic missions on the ongoing investigation into last week's attempt to assassinate the Prime Minister, and later gave the same briefing in a joint press conference with the High Commissioners of Mozambique and South Africa. Although much of the briefings revolved around information already released by the police, Tsekoa also discussed the murder of local politician Dominic Motikoe and, for the first time, admitted that someone within the Lesotho Defense Force (LDF) must have been involved in planning and carrying out the attack. He continued to point the finger at the political opposition as having masterminded the assassination attempt, but the South African High Commissioner cast doubt on these assertions.

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Foreign Minister Implicates Opposition With Dip Corps  
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2. (C) Minister of Foreign Affairs Kenneth Tsekoa briefed heads of diplomatic missions on Tuesday, April 28; present at the briefing were ambassadors from China and Ireland, the South African High Commissioner, the UN Resident Coordinator, the charge d'affaires from the European Union, and post's CDA. Tsekoa read from a prepared statement (copy received by post) that contained information already made public by the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (ref A). The seven attackers in custody in South Africa will face weapons charges there, and then the GOL will attempt to extradite them. He emphasized the good cooperation Lesotho had received from the South African Police Service and stated that Mozambican police and Interpol agents were also present in Lesotho to assist with the GOL's ongoing investigation into the attack on the Prime Minister. At several points during this statement, he referred to the attackers as "insurgents" and "terrorists." The statement did not make any assertion about who might have been responsible for the attack. Tsekoa's statement also briefly mentioned the April 27 murder of politician Dominic Motikoe, noting that the alleged murderer was already in police custody (ref B). When answering a question posed by the Irish ambassador, Tsekoa did state that there were many unanswered questions regarding the attackers information about and access to the Makoanyane military barracks; he noted that the LDF leadership was conducting its own internal investigation, as it appeared that someone from within the

military must have been involved in the attack.

13. (C) In an open discussion with the diplomatic representatives, Tsekoa made several references that appeared to implicate the opposition party All Basotho Convention (ABC). In relation to Motikoe's murder, he stated that although the GOL did not know if there was any political connection in his killing, "the proximity in time [to the assassination attempt] is suggestive" of political motive. He also outlined a brief history of the SADC mediation addressing the disputes over alliances and the allocation of seats in parliament following the 2007 election, saying that "these things tend to connect" to current events. In addition, he spoke several times of Makotoko Lerotholi (ref A), ABC leader Tom Thabane's former bodyguard, saying that Lerotholi was seen at Makoayane barracks and that he had told the LDF soldiers taken hostage, "I'm not after you - I want the head of the PM."

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South African High Commissioner Challenges GOL Theory  
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14. (C) During the discussion with Tsekoa, the South African High Commissioner asked him directly how Lerotholi, who is "old and sick," could possibly have been involved in the attacks. Tsekoa did not answer this question, simply brushing it aside with a laugh and saying that he was old, too, but could still run. Following the meeting, the South African High Commissioner told the other diplomatic representatives that he was not afraid to speak his mind when the GOL appeared to be fingering the political opposition without cause. He stated that he had seen Lerotholi in the hospital, and that given Lerotholi's poor condition, he could not have been involved in the attack. The High Commissioner also stated that in a briefing that morning with a South African military intelligence team, here to assist with the investigation, he had told them, "You may be fed information to force you to look in a particular direction

MASERU 00000126 002.2 OF 002

during the investigation, but you must keep an open mind and really look at the evidence."

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Press Conference Repeats Same Dynamic  
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15. (C) Today's press conference included Tsekoa's delivery of the same prepared statement. He was joined by the Minister in the Prime Minister's office, Motloheloa Phooko, the High Commissioner of Mozambique (visiting from Pretoria), and the South African High Commissioner. The Mozambican High Commissioner pledged to cooperate with the GOL in the spirit of solidarity, to bring the "commander in chief" of the attack to justice, while the South African High Commissioner carefully said that when the GOL could provide "hard evidence" of the involvement of any South African resident in the attack, the South African government would be happy to cooperate by handing over suspects. In response to a question about the political opposition, Tsekoa said that it was "unwise to speculate about Party X or Party Y," but that the GOL would share information once its investigation was complete.

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Comment  
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16. (C) The South African High Commissioner's open doubt of the GOL theories made for some unexpected tension and confirms other speculation post has heard about Lerotholi's condition. Tsekoa's implications about the opposition's involvement are not surprising, but without any further insight into the GOL's investigation, it's difficult to say how credible they might be.  
POWER